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ABSTRACT

This presentation on the preparation of early childhood teachers addresses implication of multiculturalism and bilingual education in early childhood programs. The purpose of the presentation was threefold: (1) to increase understanding of bilingualism and multiculturalism; (2) to compare and contrast bilingualism and multiculturalism; and (3) to explore implications for the preparation of teachers and the development of strong early childhood programs. Following a brief overview, the first section of the paper addresses "Bilingual Education," including the acquisition of English, bilingualism and cognitive development, bilingualism and social development, and bilingualism and parental involvement. The second section addresses "Multicultural Education." The final section addresses implications for early childhood teacher preparation programs. This section asserts that teacher education programs must: (1) provide opportunities and encourage faculty and teacher education students to reflect on their own values; (2) provide internships at community based organizations serving many cultures; (3) teach ways of working with non-English speaking young children; and (4) encourage students to become pedagogically proficient in a language other than English. This section also contends that preschools and daycare centers must: (1) have a bilingual education program in place; (2) provide support in nurturing bilingual programs; (3) create culturally sensitive recruitment procedures; and (4) encourage staff diversification. (SD)

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"Bilingualism and Multiculturalism Go to Early Childhood Programs"

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Since the theme of the Early Childhood Faculty Consortium's symposia is "Preparing Teachers to Serve Young Children in the 21st Century", I think it appropriate to talk a bit about who these young children and who their teachers will be. My apologies to those of you, who have been attending these symposia since the Fall, but I think it important as a speaker to establish a baseline for my talk with you this morning.

In 1995, the National Association for The Education of Young Children reported that 9.9 million of the estimated 45 million school-age children, more than one in five, lived in households in which languages other than English were spoken (NAEYC, 1995). In June 1998, the National Center for Education Statistics projected that by the year 2000, 5.2 million preschoolers will come from non-English speaking backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). This is a 76% increase over the previous decade. The majority of these 5.2 million preschoolers will attend

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some form of publicly supported preschool, mainly Head Start programs. In 1995 the Head Start Bureau reported that the largest number of linguistically and culturally diverse children served through Head Start were Spanish speakers, with other language groups representing smaller but growing percentages. As world political events change, immigration to the United States will increase, and I suspect so will the variety of languages spoken by preschoolers.

Unlike the marked increase in non-English speaking preschoolers, in 1994 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 12% of public school teachers and administrators were minorities and that this percentage was expected to decrease. As we all know, access to the medical, legal and business professions have increased for minorities. Additionally, serving as undergraduate teacher education coordinator and advisor at Lehman College within CUNY, I sense that the percentage of minority teacher education students will further decrease. I think this is due to the State credentialing examinations, along with newer, more rigorous academic entrance criteria to the CUNY four-year schools. If the fifth year program that we hear so much about becomes the only avenue for initial teacher certification, many of our full-time working students may give up, four years of full time work and study is hard

enough, imagine a fifth year. I am sure that minority students will eventually "learn the process" but some may require additional support and resources.

Past studies in teacher education have indicated that teachers' theories inform the enactment of curriculum, and consequently, what children experience in the classroom (Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976; Clandinin, 1985; Geneshi, 1992). Since the majority of teacher education students will be from a different cultural and language background than the young children they will serve, teacher education programs need to facilitate reflection for all students, particularly when preparing students to work in culturally and linguistically different communities.

Given that such a high percentage of young children will be from non-English speaking households, and that the percentage of minority teachers will continue to decrease, the consortium's topic for this symposium: "Issues in Multiculturalism: Bilingual and Multicultural Implications in Early Childhood Programs" is a timely one.

I speak to you this morning as a colleague who knows the issues we all confront in early childhood teacher education. I need not spend 30 minutes discussing the importance and relevance of building on children's strengths, particularly their language, whatever it happens

to be, or their culture of which language is a part- we are all united by virtue of being "early childhood people". Rather, I think it important to help you define or re-define your understanding of bilingualism and multiculturalism and its components; compare and contrast bilingualism and multiculturalism; and given our task of preparing teachers to serve young children in the 21st century, talk about the implications for the preparation of teachers and the development of strong early childhood programs in meeting the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children and their communities.

In my twenty-five years as an educator, 15 of those as a teacher educator, I have supervised many teacher education students and visited many "bilingual, multicultural" early childhood education programs. These programs have run the scope in identifying themselves as bilingual/multicultural: ranging from an assistant teacher "translating" for four year olds to the head teacher saying " it doesn't matter if you only use English, good early childhood practice is always language based and learning is contextualized." Although functioning from good intentions, this scope may not be in the best interest of developmentally appropriate practice for culturally and linguistically different students.

We all know the importance of language in constructing meaning, if children aren't negotiating their meaning, and we allow assistant teachers to do it, we are not providing developmentally appropriate practice. And yes, effective early childhood practice is contextualized, allowing children to participate through mediums other than oral language, but when children are able to learn through their own language, they bring their way of knowing to the task as well as having an opportunity to validate their traditions, values, and attitudes (Chang, 1993). Equally important, all children begin to acquire a diverse perspective on life.

Before recommending "effective" practices for 21st century teachers preparing to serve young children, I think it important to explore bilingual and multicultural education.

Bilingual Education

The education community's perceptions of bilingual education are varied. Some view bilingual education as Spanish language instruction for Spanish- speaking children. Others view bilingual education as English language instruction for non-English speaking children.

Others take an entirely different view, and perceive bilingual education as a political movement of Latino politicians and well-educated Latino professionals for personal gains (Crawford, 1992).

The more prevalent view, perhaps non-existent or present in varying degrees among the early childhood community, but certainly present to a high degree among the larger education community, is that of a deficit model of bilingual education. Rather than affirming the advantages of bilingualism, viewing it as an asset, some school programs view bilingualism as detrimental to children's development, and under the guise of "helping the children" begin direct, passive, drill-oriented English language instruction. This is the approach that most bilingual programs assume in the New York City public schools. Having been associated with the New York City public schools for many years in both teaching and supervisory/administrative positions, prior to returning full- time to higher education, I can attest to the often times detrimental "transitions" provided young children as they entered an English language school system. Although required by the Aspira Consent Decree, many otherwise eligible young Kindergartners are rarely maintained in bilingual classrooms, past one or two years. I trust that with the

forthcoming universal pre-K movement, our community will be able to use some of the information presented here today, and advocate for a more developmentally appropriate program, inclusive of children's native language and culture.

To insure clarity here, I would like to use Colin Baker's (1995) definition of bilingual education. He defines bilingual education as a program of instruction that uses and promotes two languages in the education of language minority children: children's native language and in the United States, English as the second language. Furthermore, since there are many different languages spoken, native language instruction is not always Spanish, and subsequently, bilingual programs are not always for Spanish-speaking children. The practice of bilingual education has existed for many decades in many different parts of the world, and in many other languages (Baker & Garcia, 1995). Additionally, the degree to which children's native language, culture, and ESL approaches will be used, vary depending on children's English language fluency and family's level of assimilation/acculturation (Cummins, 1997).

This is an important point. Often times educator's expectations of "bilingual" children are the same, regardless of these variables. These expectations may not

be in the best interest of all bilingual children. Obviously, more proficient English-speaking children coming from highly assimilated households, would require less native language interaction, than a newly arrived Portuguese three-year-old.

I would like to further suggest that we couch this bilingual education approach in a developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum. In other words, if we pontificate "developmentally appropriate" approaches in early childhood programs, they must have a deliberate, systematic way of including non-English speaking children's native language and culture in instruction. In the absence of this, we are not providing developmentally appropriate practice. This is also the position taken by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1995).

Aside from the more obvious reason for providing bilingual services to young children and their families, namely more effective communication, the professional literature indicates added linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional advantages to providing young children with bilingual services.

Bilingualism and the Acquisition of English

Soto (1991) and Wong-Fillmore (1991) indicate that the loss of children's home language may have developmentally catastrophic effects on children. They state that the loss of children's home language may result in the disruption of family communication patterns, which may lead to the loss of intergenerational wisdom; damage to individual and community esteem; and children's potential non-mastery of their home language or English. Frank Smith (1995) indicated the powerful role of the first language in the acquisition of the second, and in making the child literate in both. Similarly Cummins (1993) found that non-English speaking children require from 5-7 years to acquire academic language skills in English; a process that he advocates should begin gradually in the preschool years while using children's native language for concept formation. Furthermore, Narvarez (1983) suggested that verbal and non-verbal communication patterns used by Spanish-speaking children in a bilingual early childhood increased and were more varied when a supportive native language learning approach was used in the classroom. The Intercultural Montessori School in Oak Park, Illinois reports that non-English speaking preschoolers acquire English when immersed in supportive bilingual

settings (Rosanova, 1998). Finally, Garcia (1995) reported an increase in English language proficiency among Native American children, when bilingual instruction occurred.

Bilingualism and Cognitive Development

There is research indicating the positive values of bilingualism in young children's cognitive development. Chang (1993) reported that home language of bilingual children is tied to their culture, and that that culture prescribes appropriate ways of processing information and gaining knowledge. Therefore parents and early educators should be encouraged to make use of this asset in early learning. Garcia (1995) indicated that bilingual children display cognitive advantages in metalinguistic awareness, concept formation tasks, and analogical reasoning ability, when compared to monolinguals. Similarly, Martorrell (1991) found a significant relationship between native language proficiency and degree of giftedness among bilingual kindergartners. Finally, Garcia (1995) advocated using culture and language specific learning activities when working with bilingual children.

In summary, there appears to be a consensus among professionals as to the advantages of bilingualism for cognitive development.

Bilingualism and Social Development

In addition to cognitive advantages of bilingualism, there appear to be advantages in children's social development.

Garcia (1995) found that Head Start classrooms using developmentally appropriate practice provided a closer parallel to the Native American children's valuing of group cooperation and interaction. He believes that developmentally appropriate practice approaches in bilingual classrooms, such as noncorporal punishment discipline, flexible time schedules and opportunities for creative experiences, are a better fit to the Native American culture. Similarly, Erikson (1950) pointed out that children form a sense of identity by integrating the cultural roles learned in the family and community with their own individual needs, abilities, and wishes. Furthermore, Rogoff, Gauvain, & Ellis (1984) indicated that culture and individual development are mutually embedded; both are

essential in understanding why children behave in the way they do.

In other words, bilingual classrooms affirm not only the native language of the child, but sustain children's culture, and in doing so, facilitate children's social and emotional development.

Bilingualism and Parental Involvement

Bilingual education programs provide a point of entry for non-English speaking parents, who are in the process of learning how to negotiate the school system and finding new ways of child-rearing, sometimes very different from their own (Fuller, Perola, Holloway, Liaz & Ramband, 1994). This is critical in early childhood programs, particularly for Latino families.

Fuller et al (1994) found that only 39% of Latino families with a full time working mother, chose a formal center or preschool for the care of their 3-5 year olds, compared to 58% of Afro-American families and to 54% of white families. The reasons for such low enrollment was attributed to: (a) lack of cultural congruence between mother and child-care provider; (b) language differences; (c) lack of communication and shared commitment to child's

development- Latina mothers were looking for a "compromiso" (a bond, promise) from the school in helping with socialization of the child through "warm, personal bonds". Additionally, the concept of "educacion" held by Latina mothers connotes a broader socialization agenda; one that emphasizes learning to get along with other children, respect for adult authorities and conformity; and (d) the availability of extended family members for childcare. This study suggests that individual formal centers and preschools need to identify ways of increasing their Latino preschoolers, taking into account the above reasons.

Tabors (1997) found that bilingual programs with strong parental components, engaged parents in formulating their children's educational programs. Similarly, Schwartz (1996) indicates that recruitment strategies that are culturally sensitive, increase the Latino preschool population. Finally, providing English language or others skills development classes for adults can bolster parents' belief in the value of an entire preschool program (McLeod, 1996; Espinosa, 1995).

I hope that this discussion on bilingualism and its relationship to early childhood programs challenges you and your communities of learners to reformulate your conception of bilingualism in early childhood programs.

Multicultural Education

Sonia Nieto (1992) defined multicultural education as "...a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers, represent... " (p.207)

The seven basic characteristics of multicultural education are: multicultural education is antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, process, and critical pedagogy. Central to Nieto's definition of multicultural education is the notion that it must permeate every level of the educational process: from hiring of staff to classroom materials.

Implementation of multicultural education varies, but the literature identifies four approaches. The transformation approach where the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The Contribution approach which

focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements. The social action approach where students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them. The additive approach where content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing the structure (Banks, 1998). The two most commonly used approaches in schools are the contribution and additive approaches. In none of these approaches, is instruction in two languages mentioned.

Kendall (1996) states five primary goals of multicultural education in preschool classrooms: (a) to teach children to respect others' cultures and values as well as their own; (b) to help all children learn to function successfully in a multicultural, multiracial society; (c) to develop a positive self-concept in those children who are most affected by racism-children of color; (d) to help all children experience in positive ways both their differences as culturally diverse people and their similarities as human beings; and (e) to allow children to experience people of diverse cultures working together as unique parts of a whole community.

While there are some similarities between what I defined earlier as bilingual education and multicultural education, namely, respect for cultural diversity and

inclusiveness, multicultural education preschool classrooms, do not fully meet all of the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse young children.

I value multicultural education, and think its premise must be used in classroom for all children. However, I think that preschool centers serving bilingual communities need to include native language components in providing developmentally appropriate practice. In those preschool centers where there are few non-English speaking children or where there are many different languages spoken, a strong English As A Second Language approach must be infused to the multicultural education model. Using "multicultural education" models as the sole delivery model for bilingual populations does not fully serve bilingual children and their parents. Much in the same way that utilizing "bilingual education" models does not fully serve all children and parents.

Implications for the Preparation of Teachers and Early Childhood Programs

My talk to you this morning about bilingualism and multiculturalism affects the preparation of teachers of young children in the next millennium, in a variety of ways:

1. Teacher education programs must: (a) provide opportunities and encourage their faculty and all teacher education students to reflect on their own values, beliefs, and theories, that are shaping their professional practice with all children and students; (b) include experiences for all teacher education students to intern at community based organizations serving culturally and linguistically different families; (c) include experiences (either coursework or field internships) that immerse all teacher education students in effective ways of working with non-English speaking young children; (d) encourage all teacher education students to become pedagogically proficient in a language other than English.

2. Formal preschools, and Headstart/ Daycare Centers serving bilingual communities must: (a) have a systematic bilingual education program in place, that is inclusive of the components I discussed earlier, including multicultural education practices, children's native language and culture, English as A Second Language (ESL) component and has involved all staff and local community in its design (b) provide on-going support to all staff in developing and nurturing the bilingual program; (c) have a systematic recruitment effort that is culturally sensitive as a means of increasing the number of Latino families in formal

childcare settings; and (d) make a conscientious effort in diversifying its staff and personnel practices.

Above all, in closing, I would like to encourage you, and all the communities with whom you work, to view bilingualism and multiculturalism as additive and gifted education for all children.

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